

And Joash, Gideon's father, said: "If Baal is a god, he can take care of himself, and punish the man who has destroyed his image. Why should you help Baal? Let Baal help himself."

And when they saw that Baal could not harm the man who had broken down his altar and his image, the people turned from Baal, back to their own Lord God.

Gideon sent messengers through all Manasseh on the west of Jordan, and the tribes near on the north; and the men of the tribes gathered around him, with a few swords and spears, but very few, for the Israelites were not ready for war. They met beside a great spring on mount Gilboa, called "the fountain of Harod." Mount Gilboa is one of the three mountains on the east of the plain of Esdraelon, or the plain of Jezreel, where once there had been a great battle. On the plain, stretching up the side of another of these mountains, called "the Hill of Moreh," was the camp of a vast Midianite army. For as soon as the Midianites heard that Gideon had undertaken to set his people free, they came against him with a mighty host.

Gideon was a man of faith. He wished to be sure that God was leading him, and he prayed to God and said:

"O Lord God, give me some sign that thou wilt save Israel through me. Here is a fleece of wool on this threshing floor. If tomorrow morning the fleece is wet with dew, while the grass around it is dry, then I shall know that thou are with me; and that thou wilt give me victory over the Midianites." **(SEE PART II)**

WHO APPEARED TO GIDEON?

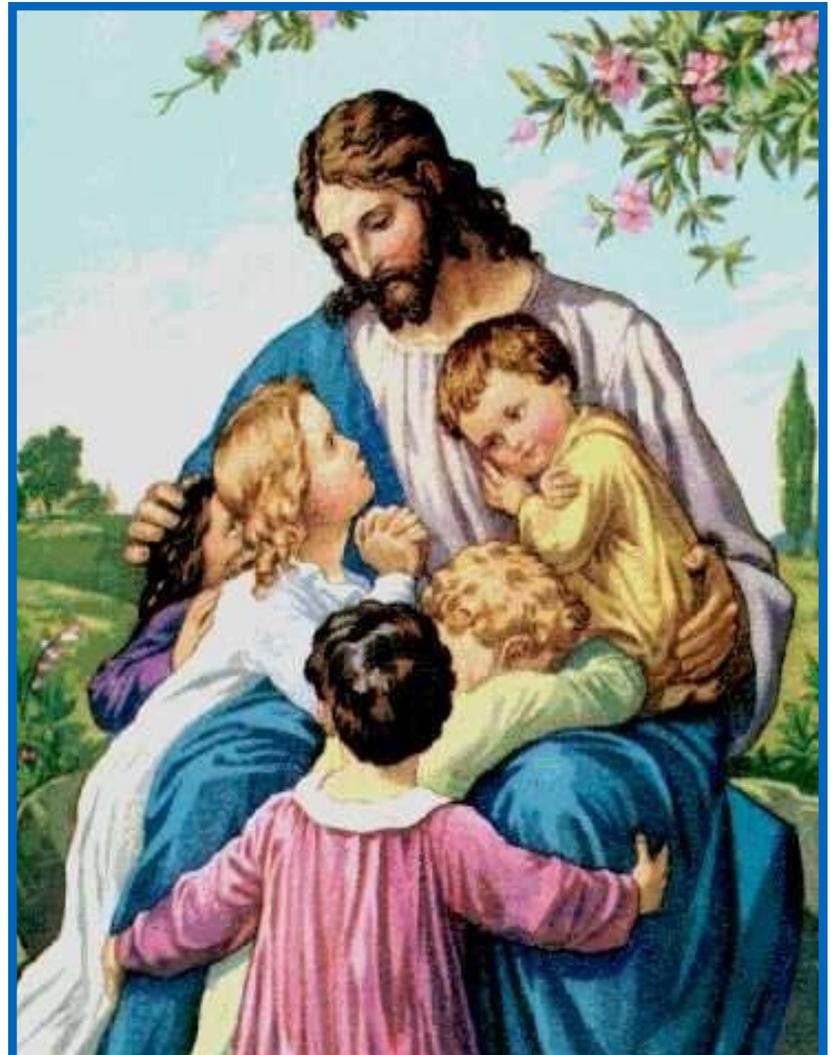
**DO YOU THINK THAT IT WAS
OUR LORD
DISGUISED AS AN ANGEL?**



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The Story of Gideon and His Three Hundred Soldiers Part - I of II



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GIDEON AND HIS THREE HUNDRED SOLDIERS

PART - I

At last the people of Israel came into the promised land, but they did evil in the sight of the Lord in worshipping Baal; and the Lord left them to suffer for their sins. Once the Midianites, living near the desert on the east of Israel, came against the tribes. The two tribes that suffered the hardest fate were Ephraim, and the part of Manasseh on the west of Jordan. For seven years the Midianites swept over their land every year, just at the time of harvest, and carried away all the crops of grain, until the Israelites had no food for themselves, and none for their sheep and cattle. The Midianites brought also their own flocks and camels without number, which ate all the grass of the field.

The people of Israel were driven away from their villages and their farms, and were compelled to hide in the caves of the mountains. And if any Israelite could raise any grain, he buried it in pits covered with earth, or in empty winepresses, where the Midianites could not find it.

One day, a man named Gideon was threshing out wheat in a hidden place, when he saw an angel sitting under an oak tree. The angel said to him: "You are a brave man, Gideon, and the Lord is with you. Go out boldly, and save your people from the power of the Midianites." Gideon answered the angel:

"O, Lord how can I save Israel? Mine is a poor family in Manasseh, and I am the lest in my father's house."

And the Lord said to him: "Surely I will be with you, and I will help you drive out the Midianites."

Gideon felt that it was the Lord who was talking with him, in the form of an angel. He brought an offering, and laid it on a rock before the angel. Then the angel touched the offering with his staff. At once, a fire leaped up and burned the offering; and then the

angel vanished from his sight. Gideon was afraid when he saw this; but the Lord said to him: "Peace be unto you Gideon, do not fear, for I am with you."

On the spot where the Lord appeared to Gideon, under an oak tree, near the village of Ophrah, in the tribe-land of Manasseh, Gideon built an altar and called it by a name which means; "The Lord is peace." This altar was standing long afterward in that place.

Then the Lord told Gideon that before setting his people free from the Midianites, he must first set them free from the service of Baal and Asherah, the two idols most worshiped among them. Near the house of Gideon's own father stood an altar to Baal, and the image of Asherah.

On that night, Gideon went out with ten men, and threw down the image of Baal, and cut in pieces the wooden image of Asherah, and destroyed the altar before these idols. And in its place he built an altar to the God of Israel; and on it laid the broken pieces of the idols for wood, and with them offered a young ox as a burnt-offering.

On the next morning, when the people of the village went out to worship their idols, they found them cut in pieces, the altar taken away; in its place an altar of the Lord, and on it the pieces of the Asherah were burning as wood under a sacrifice to the Lord. The people looked at the broken and burning idols; and they said: "Who has done this?"

Some one said: "Gideon, the son of Joash, did this last night."

Then they came to Joash, Gideon's father, and said:

"We are going to kill your son because he has destroyed the image of Baal, who is our god."